

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
HOLYOKE

INFORMANT: ROBERT DUBE
INTERVIEWER: GILES HOPKINS
DATE: APRIL 20, 1988

H = GILES HOPKINS
D = ROBERT DUBE
MD = MRS. DUBE

SG-HO-T316

[parakeet chirps in background throughout interview]

D: Right.

H: Whole, whole industry.

D: Right.

H: Okay. Um, I guess to start us, to, to start with could you tell me a little bit about yourself, your background? Uh where y-, wh-

D: Where I come from?

H: Where you were born. Yeah, where you come from,

D: Well, I was born (- -)

H: Your parents.

D: I was born in [unclear] Maine. And uh of course I wa-, I only went as far as the seventh grade. And I quit school, I went to work in a paper mill up there. (H: Uh huh) I started up there. I worked there three years. And after that I went to Biddeford, Maine.

H: How old were you in, in

D: Well when I quit

H: [unclear] when you started?

D: Uh s-sixteen years old.

H: Sixteen when you started?

D: Right. (H: Uh huh) In the paper mill. (H: Uh huh) [pause: 3 sec.]

H: And then you went to (D: A-, a-, and then) Biddeford?

D: And then I went to Biddeford. Uh, 1949. (H: Um hm) And I worked in the cotton mill, at the [Pepperell]. I worked there for three years. (H: Uh huh) And uh, and then I came to Holyoke, in 1952. (H: Uh huh) And I came to work, well uh, uh my, my sister and my uh, my brother-in-law were here then. And so I went to work for the Wire, the Wire and Cable Company. (H: Uh huh) On Main Street. I forgot the address now, but it was down on Main Street. And from there I quit there, I worked there only about, oh maybe six month. And because I, I was, I was getting all full of glue you know, I, (H: Um hm) I, [there was a] Wire and i-, and I, I was uh pouring the glue and, and they wasn't paying much you know. (H: Um hm) So I quit there and I went to work for the uhh Chicopee Manufacturing in the Chicopee Falls. (H: Um hm) Eh it was Johnson & Johnson.

H: What did they do?

D: Uh, ewah they made uhh cot-, they, a cotton mill. (H: Um hm) That, that was a cotton mill. So, and then I got drafted in fifty-two. I went there, I think it was about March. March or April. And then in uh August of fifty-tw-, uhoh July of fifty-two I got drafted. (H: Um hm) And I went in, I went to Korea and then I came back. I went back there, and, and, and from there I went, ow, I, I came back, I, I went to work for the Crocker-[McCullen]. (H: Um hm) Uh, no, I, I take that back. I went to work at Whiting Mill. A number two mill. And I work there two uh, two years and then uh, and, and then they, they closed it. (H: Um hm) 1955. And from there I went to Parsons Paper. (H: Um hm) I worked there a while, and then I quit there and I went to the American Writing. 1960. And then, uh they uh, and the Brown paper bought it (H: Um hm) in nineteen sixty-, nineteen sixty-three. Yeah, sixty-three. (H: Um hm) And I re-, I, I, I, I was on the, on the paper machine. I was a back tender then. And then from there uh they, they, they closed that division. The Mt. Tom Division. (H: Oh, it was Mt. Tom, um hm) Mt. Tom. (H: Um hm) And, and, and from there I, I quit. And then I went uh, I quit there and went, what the hell d-. Oh! And then I went to the Crocker-[McCullen].

H: You quit the Mt. Tom before they closed or (- -)

D: No, no, no. When, when they closed. (H: When they closed) They eh, they eh, they wanted me (- -) I c-, I could have stayed there but uh, but they wanted me to go on the air dryer. (H: Uh huh) And I knew what the air dryer was. (H: Uh huh) It was an awful job. And I didn't like it, and so i quit there and I went to the Crocker-[McCullen]. (H: Um hm) And from there, I worked there about a year, about a year, a year and a half, and then I (- -)

H: What did you work at, at Crocker-[McCullen]?

D: Eh, I worked on the paper machine.

H: You back tendered?

D: Uh, no, no. I went to uh, I, I had to start all over again.

H: So (- -)

D: Uhh third hand. (H: Um hm) And then fr-, and then from there I went back uh, oh, oh, wait a minute. Woe, oh, oh. Then from there I went to the uh [Mulvullen]. (H: Um hm) From sixty, I worked there about two years, at [Mulvullen]. And then I went back at Parsons. And then in sixty-nine I went back tuh, tuh, uh Brow-Brown Paper and I been there e-e-ever since.

H: You [Mr. Dube coughs] said you worked at Parsons, earlier.

D: Uh, uh Parsons Paper, yeah.

H: Always starting on (D: I) the paper machines?

D: Fifty-six. (H: Uh huh) In fifty-six. I, I, I started a third hand then I went to backtending. (H: Um hm) And then I, I machine tend for about six month. And I, I couldn't take it.

H: [pause: 3 sec.] Was it the (- -)

D: And it was, weh ah too, too uh, it was too much for me. You know, for uh, for the education I had.

H: The machine tending.

D: It was too much.

H: The m-, the job itself?

D: Oh yeah. Yeah, there was a lot of, a lot of paper work. (H: Um hm) And I, I just couldn't do it. (H: Um hm) And so I quit. I quit there and then I, and then I, in sixty-nine I, I went back there. There uh, Brown, there there was Brown Paper then. (H: Uh huh) And then [when] we bought it; uh, muh, Mr. Belsky bought it in eighty, [pause: 3 sec.] oh wait a minute, no, it was before that [ended]. Yeah, about eighty I guess. Seventy-nine or eighty. (H: Um hm) He bought the place and I, well I've been there since sixty-nine. (H: Um hm)

H: You s-, you started as a third hand? There?

D: No, no. I went, I w-, I went right o-, right off as a back tender.

H: Right off as a (D: Yeah) back tender at Brown? (D: Yeah) Uh huh.

D: At the Crocker Division. (H: Uh huh) And then they closed that, and then I did some [odd work]. Ehh, c-, because in them days they had a lot of guys that had more uh more seniority. (H: Uh huh) So I had to work on the [cutterer], I worked on the, on the [sheeters]. I, I, I went all, all over the place. (H: Uh huh) Until, until they had an opening on the uh back on the paper machine. (H: Uh huh)

H: But you kept working (D: Yeah) for the same (D: Oh yeah!) company. (D: Yeah) Okay. (D: Yeah) S-so (- -)

D: Eh I had day jobs, I had night jobs. Oh, Jesus! They're always, they, they, they, they uh (- -) After, after uh we got settled there, I, I went back on the machine. And uh, oh that was about eighty, I'd say about eighty-five. (H: Um hm)

H: So did y- (- -)

D: No, it was before that.

H: You were always working though.

D: Oh yeah.

H: Always (D: Yeah) working.

D: Yeah, I oh I had a job. (H: Um hm) I had a job. Oh yeah. But I, I, eh like I said eh, that was guys there you know that were uh had more seniority. (H: Um, hm) And I had to wait. [both talk]

H: So you'd work at different jobs?

D: Right. Eh you know they'd put me here, put me there. Where, well where, wherever eh where they needed a guy. (H: Um hm) They know I, I go over.

H: Was it a change in wages every time you moved or (- -)

D: Oh yes. Oh yes. There wasn't, it never was the same. If uh, if th-, and the, and the, and if the job called for higher wages I got the higher wages. (H: Um hm) You know they, they had to pay me. (H: Um hm) You know the, the job.

H: Did it usually work (- -) [both talk]

D: With different job and with d-, d-, different pay. (H: Um hm)

H: W-was that difficult for you? Is uh (- -)

D: Well, at first it was. Gee whiz! I, I, I didn't like it, but I, I stuck it out. (H: Um hm) But like I say I didn't have t-, I don't have too much education. (H: Um hm) And I had to, you know to bounce around here, here and there. (H: Um hm)

H: What about the, (D: So) the, you said, you mentioned you had different shifts. You'd have to work at night or you'd have to work in (D: Oh yeah) the mornings and all this. Was that (- -)

D: Yeah. That was uh [towel] work. (H: Um hm) That was uh well one week days, one week two to eleven or, or whatever it was you know. Uh, uh eleven to seven.

H: Was it always eight hours? (D: Oh yeah) Eight hour shifts?

D: Yeah, yeah. But when A-, when American Writing had it I, I used to work on the paper machine there and then I come here on Jackson Street. They had the Linden. And I used to go work o-on the air dryer there. (H: Um hm) You know a third hand. So, so I wa-, I was working uh sixteen hours a day.

H: You worked two jobs (D: Two jobs) at the same time? (D: Yeah) When was this?

D: Oh that was, oh God!

MD: Is that when we were on Main Street?

D: No no, no no, (MD: South Bridge?) no, no. On Bridge Street. Oh God, that was (- -)

MD: Oh fifteen years or, or so I guess.

D: Oh I'd say, I'd say in the middle sixties or late, uh e-early seventies.

H: And how long did you work two jobs? That seems [both talk] terribly difficult.

D: Oh I did that, I, I, did that for oh, oh I'd say a couple of years. (H: Uh huh) I'd say a couple of years. But it was easier then. You know [both talk] everything was slow. You know the machines were slow and uh, I, and, and the guys we used to work with were nice people. (H: Um hm) I never, eh, ask the wife, I'd come home, I'd be happy. (H: Really.) And, and I was glad to go to work. Believe me I was glad to go to work. I d-, I, I didn't care how many hours I used to work.

H: Why did you (- -)

D: But that (- -) But, you know the people I used to work with were nice people. (H: Um hm) [someone coughs] Uh and a lot of them were Polish people. You know they were, well they were just j-, well, I, I shouldn't say this but they, they were were, well they were just as ignorant as I was. You know they, they d-, uh they did their job, I'd do my job. And, and, and

then if w-, if one gets in trouble, we used to help each other you know. (H: Um hm) But today uh it's, no, there's no more of that. T-uh today, w-y-ya, ya, if you, if you get i-in trouble they, they, they just walk around. You know they [way], they don't want to help you.

H: Why do you think that is?

D: Oh! Jesus. [sighs] [both talk]

H: When did, when did this change begin? When did the (- -)

D: Oh I'd say it (- -) Oh God! That's, that's hard to predict. Maybe six, seven years ago. (H: Um hm) Because tha-there, because I got out of there now, I'm telling you. Uh what's your first name?

H: Giles. Giles.

D: [Chile]?

H: Giles. It's (MD: Giles) (D: Giles) kind of a difficult (- -)

MD: (D: Uh) Are you French?

H: No. It's, it's an English (- -) [Mrs. Dube continues to talk about his name, some of it unclear] New England, it's a New England name. [Mrs. Dube talks some more] Yeah.

D: But now I, I, I hate to go to work in the morning, (H: Um hm) and when I come out I'm so tired. (H: Um hm) And it's not because of my age. Of course I age you know. (H: Um hm) But it's, it's not that. Of course they speed up the machines, too. (H: Uh huh) You know that's uhh, that makes a lot. [Mrs. Dube coughs in the background] You know we, the paper comes out uh faster and you got to, you know you're on the go all the time. (H: Um hm) And with the help we got today, forget it.

H: Are there, are the m-, the machines (D: Uhh, uh) are just sped up or are they, are they all the time running faster now? Nowadays [unclear] (- -)

D: Oh yeah, oh yeah. See in the, in, well I call that in the old days, we used to ru-, uh run the [got] the uh, one set of pa-, uh well one roll a-, a-, and we'll probably take about an hour and a half. And now, twenty minutes; (H: Hm) twenty-five minutes, a half hour. And you got to take it off and then, you know, y-y-y-y-you got to keep going. And if you ain't got the right, the, if you ain't got a good third hand (- -) (H: Um hm) I do all the work. I do all the work. And then, and that I can prove. With the i-, if I got a good third hand, he knows what, what he's doing, that (- -) (H: Um hm) It, it makes it a hell of a lot easier for me! Much easier.

H: Is this, uh does the union have any involvement in this? The speed of machines and uh (- -)

D: Well, the union I got n-, uh nothing to do with the work.

H: How do the workers (D: So) feel about the, I mean this is the speed-up from the company's management (D: Well, tha-) side.

D: Yeah that's, that's from the you know, the, they gave you a raise and then they speed up, (H: Uh huh) speed up, speed up. Well, tha-, that's been, that's been since uh, uh gosh since fifteen years ago. They been, they're all adding up, adding, speeding. Of course they, of course the company wants to make money. (H: Uh huh) And they got to speed up the, their, you know, uh, uh and make production. (H: Um hm) And it's not, it's not how good the paper is today; (H: Um hm) as far as, as far as I'm concerned. They want production. And they're going to get it. They're going to get it or else they're going to close the place down. (H: Um hm) That's (- -)

H: So the (D: That's) workers (- -)

D: That's my opinion. Of course there's a you know, there- (- -) I'm, I'm, I, I may be wrong.

H: You think there's (D: You know) less quality nowadays?

D: Oh yeah, there's much less quality. I think. That, that's my opinion.

H: How did, did the workers (D: So, eh) uh react to this speed-up in any way?

D: No!

H: The union uh (D: Well) complains or anything?

D: Oh no. No, there's, there's no complaint because they, they had to do that to keep us uh you know to keep us working.

H: So everybody realizes that?

D: Oh yeah. (H: Um hm) Oh yeah. Yeah. So we've been pretty good eh, ever since uhh Mr. Belsky bought that. We're, we're, we, we been working six, seven days a week. (H: Um hm; sh-) Uh what uh, what uh last week we worked f-five days. I was surprised.

H: Six or seven, your, you yourself work six or seven days?

D: Oh (H: A week) yes! For, for, for the last eight years.

H: Really. Is that, that's overtime.

D: Oh yeah, that's uh Saturdays time and a half and Sundays is double time. (H: Uh huh) And I used to work, well, I'm talking about maybe three, three or four years ago, I used to work twelve, sixteen (- -) [Christ] my, my wife would never see me.

MD: Feel like a widow sometimes. (H: Really) He's never home.

D: Oh yeah. Oh he, he kept us going though. That, that, that's one thing I'll, I'll, I'll say about him. (H: Um hm) He kept us working. But it's like I said, it's, it's not that, me I'm, I, I, I'm raving about. It's, it's the help. (H: Yeah) The help we get today, forget it. (H: But (- -)) A-and them guys got, got more education where, when than I got. And the (- -) And they just don't give a damn.

H: Could, maybe I could go back to something. Uh y-you said in the old days they uh, a lot of uh Polish people (D: Oh yeah) working (D: There was a lot of Polish) in the mills. (D: In there; Oh, geez!) Have you seen a change i-in uh (- -) (D: Oh a lot of change!) who's working in the mills now? (D: Oh-ho yes!) Could you describe that? A-and talk about that a little bit? Uh, (D: Well uh) if the dish-, different nationalities in the, in (- -)

D: Oh now, now there's uh, the, the Polish people are, are all vanished from there. (H: Um hm) [You know] the old, the old people, the old Polish people in that, of course there has, you know in them days they had the rag room. That's, that's another thing. They had the rag room. They had uh filters and all that, you know. (H: Um hm) But that, now, now that's all gone. Tha-, that's all the, everything comes in. There's no more rags though. (H: Um hm) It's all uh hardwood. (H: Um hm) It comes in slab. You know i-y-, it comes in, the hardwood and softwood and all that. And they don-, and w-we don't use any more rags. (H: Um hm) That's gone. That's gone forever. They, they, they don't use that anymore. And, and it's like I said, they w-w-where, uh where they got, and the [beater] room is busy all the time. (H: Um hm) The-, uh them guys work hard in the [beater] room. I know because I, I, I take a walk down wha-, wha-, once in a while, to go see a friend of mine you know? (H: Um hm) And them guys are busy. They're busy all the time. And, and they're short of help in there, too. Believe me. Oh yeah, and that's, and that's another thing. We used to have a, a fourth hand. (H: Um hm) You know, an extra guy. (H: Um hm) So he, he used to weigh up the rolls you know, and uh pick up the [broke], and stuff like that. And when, when, when we used to get a, a break, like me I was a back tender, I was always, if I didn't have, of course it was easy, a back tender was easier in them days. (H: Um hm) Geez, it is, guh, I-g-, you had to have a, have a good roll you know, and then the third hand would uh, would wind it up on the, on the winder. And then the, him, him and the fourth hand used, used to work together. (H: Um hm) So, and me I, I go up and help the uh, well the machine tender. If he, if he needed any help.

H: Did the uh (- -)

D: Uh now, now I can't do it! (H: Uh huh) I can't do it. I got to watch the third hand. (H: Uh huh) And the third hand don't know nothing.

H: Did the uh, y-did the (- -)

D: And, and they don't break them in today either. (H: Uh huh) They, he comes in one day, and, and, and then the uh, a-a-and nobody breaks him in. They, eh-uh wha-, I said, "Hey, here's your job." And, and, and he uh, and he, he introduced me to him, (H: Uh huh) he said, "He's going to be your third hand." There, there's no more training.

H: So it was different in the old days. [both talk] (- -) break them in.

D: Oh they used to have a, a training program in them days. (H: Uh huh) Oh yeah! The guy, whe-uh, when the third hand came on he knew his job, and the back tender didn't have to worry about it. (H: Um hm) But today he comes in, they, whe-, whe-, whe-, when they hire him, and the next day they, they say, "Here, Bob, he's go-, he's going to be your new uh third hand." (H: Um hm) He don't know nothing about the machine and noth- (- -)

H: What was that training program like? How did they, how did that work? Is that (D: Well uh) the way you yourself learned or (- -)

D: No, no. There uh (- -) The other third hand, they used to work twelve hours, all right? (H: Um hm) So he used to come in all day, see? And uh, or, or [up front] the guy o-on days used to train him. He used to show him you know, this and that. At first, the first couple days, they used to just, just show him uh a little bit at a time. (H: Um hm) And, and in them days they used to take a month, four weeks buh, be, before that guy used to go on his own. Four week. They uh, they used to give him a month. (H: Um hm) And the back tender used to be two months. (H: Um hm) Because uh where there was a lot more, you know, the, he, uh, he, he had to uh, of course w-w-the back tender has uh, had to make the bookwork. (H: Um hm) Course I, I do it now because I been doing it whe-, for so long that it don't bother me. (H: Um hm) You know I go over and I, you know, if we have a break, y-y-you have to put the time down, (H: Um hm) you know and do eh, and do the log. It's what they call a log. And you have to pu-, i-if you have a break, y-y-you look at the time, wha-what time it broke, and what time you, you start ba-, back up. And y-, and y-, a-and it's all there, it's all there in the log. (H: Um hm) And then if you, and you got to put down how much broke. There, when they went back in the [beater] room and all that. (H: Um hm) And you got all, all, Christ, you got the uh, mmm-, you got to put down the speed of the machine, how fast you're going and all that. The weight of the paper and eh what you're making. (H: Um hm) If it's parchment or uh, uh, or uh index, or cover, or whae-, whatever you're making.

H: What, what (D: So) else, what are the other things that you do in eh, in your job? In your particular job?

D: My job? (H: Yeah) Well, it's like I say, I, I got to take care of the bookwork. (H: Um hm) And then, I got to, I, I, I got to make sure the roll is, i-is even. I have to get the finish. I have to get the finish. I, if, if, if it's a little rough on one edge, we're, we have these uh, these uh things between them. (H: Um hm) Uh, it's like a wedge. I call that a wedge. (H: Um hm) And, and these are, they're all, they-they're steel wool. And sometimes it gets hot and, and, and your, and your edge gets soft. And when it gets soft, I, I go over and I uh, I take the wrench. Oowah, we have these wrenches. It's old-fashioned machine. (H: Um hm) So I take the wrench and I, I, and I raise the stack up a little bit. And then, and then I yoh, eh, eh, if I see the roll is hot, I hold it up. Yeh and that's another thing I got to do is roll up the stack. There's two stacks: we got a small stack and a big stack. So I, I roll that up and I got to make sure that, that that roll is nice and even. And I have to get the finish. (H: Um hm) So if I can't get the finish then I tell, I go over, I tell where the machine tender. I said, "That's all I can do." So he has to go down and fix it himself at the other end. (H: Um hm) He's got to, he uh, wuh, we have these uh slicers, (H:

Hm) they call them slicers, and, and sometime the slicers is uh, is, is [you got uh] too, too, too low on one end, and too high, well we'll say the front. The front and the back. If it's, i-if it's high in the back and it's low in the front, of course i-, i-, it comes down, whe-, whe-, when the paper dries up. It goes through the size tub, and then on to the small uh small dryers. And then if it's, if I can't do it eh-eh no more at my end he has to go up, and he has to uh, to uh, to adjust uh the [wetter]. And then it comes down and sometimes it works. It du-, (H: Mm) it doesn't work all the time.

H: So you really have to be (D: So) a-, constantly aware. (D: Oh yes) Keep a (D: Right) constant eye out. (D: Right, right) When you (- -)

D: And then, and, and then I got to, I got to keep track of the, of the uh, uh the uh, oh geez, the dryness. (H: Um hm) I-, i-, if I see it's a little wet or, or, or, or, or else it's, you know the paper, uh sometimes it's too dry. Well I go over, and we have a, a, a, wha-, what they call you know on the, on the dryers. It's uh, it's like a meter. (H: Um hm) And I, I got to go, that's all I have to do there, and just uh tuh, tuh uh, to wet it up I, I got to go down a little bit. (H: Um hm) And the, and it dries, uh eh it, eh it wets up the paper. It shut off the steam. You know the steam the, where the goes in the dryers all the (H: Um hm) time. And [then] shuts off the steam a little bit then it, it cools off the dryers. (H: Um hm) Uh you know, a little bit more. (H: Um hm) And then, and then it comes over and then we e-eh, that's for the finish.

H: Let, let me ask you, (D: So) y-y-y-you uh, you talked about uh working two different jobs. With all of that work to do why did you, wh-, force yourself into working two different jobs? Is this a (- -)

D: Because I, I, because if I don't, we eh, we get behind. (H: Uh huh) You know. We uh, we get behind. Uh just like today there, we was on decollate. And that decollate, it's a lot of work. A-a-and different size roll. But today uh, uh wasn't bad because I had uh two, two twenty-ones and three quarters. (H: Um hm) That's, uh that's the uh, wha-, we call that A and B roll. (H: Um hm) And then the C roll, I had a fourteen and a quarter. And then the uh D and E roll I had a eighteen and seven-eighth. So tha-, tha-, that's not bad, but it's like I say, every twenty-five minutes y-y-you got to turn it up. And you know I tell wh-, wh-, the machine tender, "Hey, it's time to turn up." "Okay."

H: But (D: So) this is a hard job though and you, back in, (D: Oh yeah!) back in the sixties you worked at two different mills?

D: Two different mills [and that]. And I even had a part-time job here on South Summer Street.

H: W-were (- -)

D: A janitor.

H: W-why did you, why'd you work that much?

D: Because I had nine kids.

H: Really?

D: That's why, that's why I worked.

H: So you both worked very hard.

D: [Laughs] My wife worked a little bit. She, she worked

MD: I worked outside too, besides having the kids. (D: Well) And the money always came in. You had social security and (- -)

D: Ah I married her she uh, she has uh six kids.

MD: [Talking at same time in background] And uh I had the six children. But then I was getting social security, so it was helping out financially. (D: Oh yeah; ev (- -)) Otherwise the money they make in the mill would never support a family of nine. No matter if he does two jobs or what. I mean if you're going to (- -)

D: At that time I had three jobs.

MD: [both talk] Eat, eat like you should and be clothes and, and all that.

D: I had three jobs at one time.

H: So the mills weren't paying u-um (- -)

D: Not, not that much. (H: Not that much) No. When, when, when I first started, that was in Ch- uh in Chisolm, Maine, though. (H: Um hm) Well, Jay, Maine. Yeah at the National Paper Company. (H: Um hm) I started off at ninety-nine cents an hour. And I was working on a work pile, because I was too, too young to go inside. I had to wait until, u-until I was eighteen. You, you know. And my father used to work there, inside. So you know, I worked on the work pile and I worked on a, wha-, what they u-, they make their own pulp over there. And, oh that's uh, tha-, tha-, that, uh the, the one up in Jay, that's more interesting than this, over here. Because there's more, there's more uh, uh m-, more stuff there because over there they use the regular wood.

H: Their own, right next to (D: Yeah, wood) the forests and (- -)

D: Yeah. (H: Yeah, I see) And they, and they uh, aw! That's uh, that there is more, is more interesting than this. Than this place here, believe me. (MD: The money's much better (- -)) And, and the money, the (- -)

H: They're (- -)

D: Of course (- -)

H: Still in operation up there? Or you, you both (- -)

D: Yeh, oh yes.

H: You know (D: Oh yes) people that still work (- -)

D: Ohhh. They got a new mill up there. (H: Um hm) But they eh, they were on strike there a few uh, about a year now. And uh things, things are picking up a little bit.

H: [both talk] Y-your (- -) Excuse me. Y-y-your father worked in the mills then. (D: Right) So he's (D: Oh yeah) [got you] interested in the mills in the first place? Or (- -)

D: No. He didn't got me interested. It's, it's like I said, I didn't want to go to school. (H: Uh huh) You know I was one of the slow learners and the (- -) Really I-I-I, I wish you wouldn't ask me that. [chuckles]

H: Okay, we (- -)

D: No, no. No, no. That's all right. [Mrs. Dube laughs.] No I was kind of you know (- -) [phone rings in background] I didn't want to learn. (H: Uh huh) [parakeet squawks] Uh let's put it that way.

H: [both talk] Rather go out and make some money.

D: Right.

H: And the whole, yeah, I can (- -)

D: You know that was in 1945. [parakeet continues to squawk and Mrs. Dube talks on phone] Uh I was uh, a f-, a f-, a matter of fact, I went, I went to work the day I was sixteen years old. February the tenth. And I got out of school and a boy, I was glad, I (- -) And the teacher says, "Good-bye." I says, (H: Um hm) I just took off. I says, "I'm going to work tomorrow." So she said, "All right." But I played, I played in uh, in grammar school, I played basketball, I played football, I (- -) Eh, and I was rough. I was a rough kid. Believe me.

H: [both talk] When you came (- -)

D: Ah of course I, I, there's uh, before that I was on a farm. (H: Um hm) You know I was born and brought up on a farm, too. We were about four, four years we was on a farm. The, before I hit the sixteen. (H: Hm)

H: When you came to the uh, [someone coughs] to Holyoke to work in the mills, [banging in background] w-were the mills um predominantly Polish workers, or French Canadians, or (- -)

D: Well, I, I (- -)

H: What was your experience o-of that?

D: Well, there was a lot (- -) To me, there was a lot of Polish people. (H: Um hm) A lot of Polish, a lo-, well, a lot of French, too, but they, I think mainly, Polish. [And boy there] was a lot of Polish people I knew. Oh, [way]! And great workers. (H: Um hm) Them people could work. Bo-oy, believe me! And uh (- -)

H: Did it seem to break down that the, the Polish people were working in one mill or in uh [both talk] one section (- -)

D: [both talk] That was all, all the mill. All the mills as far as I know. There was a lot of Polish people. And nice people to work with.

H: Who did the hiring in (D: Yeah) [unclear], when you first started working in the mills how did you go a b-, bout getting the job? Was there an em-, employment office for the, each mill or (- -)

D: Oh yeah, tha-, uh uh they had employment office. Oh yeah.

H: Was it relatives (D: [unclear]) that, that, or friends that put in a good word [Mr. Dube clears throat] or (- -)

D: No, no, no. When, when I went to Pars- uh (- -) Naw I started out, no I started off at Whiting. Ah there was uh, there was a guy I knew, he says, he says, "You're working down there?" Ay, and of course I had to take the bus. I used to live in the, I used to live in a flat. Uh what they call the flats there on West Street. (H: Um hm) So, [coughs] so uh this guy I, well I actually met him in a bar. And we started talking and he was a boss. (H: Hm) He said, "Geez," he says, he says, "I need," he says, he say, "You're working in a paper mill?" "Before," I says, "Yeah, well," I said, "that was up in Maine." He says, "I don't care." He said, "Come and see me tomorrow." He said, "I'll give you a job." And that's, and that's how it started. (H: Um hm, I see) So I, eh, eh, instead of, and, and I u-, I had to take a bus uh from Holyoke to Chicopee Falls every day. And I was on the second shift. I, I used to go in at two and come out at ten. Uhh, and that's how, and that's how, uh uh and that was in fifty-five. And that's how I, I started.

H: How easy was it for um, [Mr. Dube coughs] t-to move between the different mills? Because you've been, you've worked at a number of the different mills.

D: Uh I, some of them were a little harder but not, not, not, not, not that much harder. (H: Um hm) They're, they're all about the same. All about the same. And the guys are, like I say, the-, in them days the guys used to help you out. And they eh they see you, you was in trouble, Christ they'd rush over and ha-, and give you a hand you know. (H: Um hm) But today, forget it!

MD: Well there's not (D: They just (- -)) as many paper mills now as there used to be when we

(D: Naw, no) first came to Holyoke. (D: No) There was what? Fifteen, sixteen, if not more. Now there's three left in Holyoke? (D: Yeah. [unclear]) Paper mills have closed and moved away here.

H: Who's c-, who's [Mrs. Dube clears throat] coming in to the mills now? Who are the, the eh, i- (- -)

D: Well, mostly now is Puerto Ricans. (H: Uh huh) The Spa-, well, the Spanish people. Because they, they can't find any work in the eh, eh, any place else (H: Um hm) I guess. (H: Yeah) I don't know. But at least they're working. (H: Uh huh) But the oh, we eh, we got a, we got a lot of Spanish people in there though. (H: Um hm) And I had one today I wish he would have stayed home. [someone chuckles; Mr. Dube clears throat] Believe me. Be, because I did my work and his work. Hey, I didn't have any other choice. (H: Um hm)

H: How do you work your way up in the uh (- -) Is that, is that a possibility, to, to look at uh, working your way up from uh third hand to back tender to machine tender? Is that something (- -)

D: Oh, I could have been a machine tender twenty years ago. (H: Um hm; and (- -)) At least twenty years ago.

H: [both talk] And how does somebody (- -)

D: But I, I, I didn't want it. I [don't because it's] too (- -) Uh, th-, uh tha-, that's where eh the paper comes back. Well when a, let's say the paper's back, and he comes back. Of course uh, ya, the machine tender is right up there. And he's the one, he's the one that gets (- -) (H: Um hm) He, he, he gets hell. (H: Um hm)

H: So some people (D: So) don't want to (- -)

D: [clears throat] So we uh, excuse me. Me, I'm wise now you know. I go up, I tell him, "Hey," I said, "It's, it's [unclear], that's all right. That's all right, okay." So I goes in the office, I tell the boss, I says, "I see su- uh something in the paper. Y-you better come the [towel bar] and the [towel bar] said, "Well, didn't you tell the machine tender?" I said "Yes." "Well, well he, what did he say?" He said, "He says it's good enough to get by." "Okay." Even the [towel bar]. (H: Um hm) "Okay." So now, I learned that ten years ago. I got a, I, I got a little book in my locker. I put the date, I put the time, I put everything down. So, if that paper comes back, well, ah, ah, eh, eh w-we been having a, a, a lot of problems. The paper comes back and then they eh well, uh they come. And we have roll [ticket], and you print your name on that. (H: Um hm) The machine tender, back tender, third hand. So eh they, i-if there's wrinkle in the paper, me, me, me, I can tell uh right away eh if it's from the stack, or from the winder. You know the third hand uh uh sometimes got the friction. (H: Um hm) We have a friction. And y-, you put [that] out. Y-y-, the friction is loose and half of the time, he's half asleep. And, and the roll gets slack, and it you know i-it's [rolling] and you get wrinkles in it. But me, I put all that down, everything I do i-every day now. The last ten years I've been doing it. And I never got hell yet. I go over, I says, "Uh," and they come up to me and oh Jesus! "Look all the paper we're, uh all, all the uh,

uh paper, wrinkles and that." I says "Wrinkles," I says, "Nau, weh, not in my paper." Oh yeah. So I goes in. I said, "Who was the third hand here?" "Dave Rivera." "Ah well, he must have been asleep on the job." I says (- -)

H: So they can't blame you.

D: I says, I says, "Don't, don't blame me. I says, "I'm not running the winder." (H: Hm) Ahh, eh, eh "How come you write all that down?" I say, "Hey, I learned ten years ago." [pause: 5 sec.] And there's another thing I got to watch, too. Su, uh su, su, uh sometimes the guys a-are relieved in the morning, you know. And if they made bad paper, the back tender, I, I, I don't [unclear] just like a book [unclear]. He takes, he takes his name off, he puts my name down. (H: Hm) [laughs] So, I go the, but I check that every morning, too you know. (H: Um hm) I, I go in, I, after, after he's gone; after I relieve him, he's gone home. I goes over, I check all the rolls he did, and I look at the ticket. And sometimes I see "R.D." (H: Um hm) Well I just cross it off and I put his name down. (H: Hm) So I says, "He ai-, he, he ain't going to you know (- -) [laughs]

H: Are the attitudes different about work (D: Ohh, yeh, yeh, yeh) in the industry these days?

D: I'm telling you it's, it's unbelievable today. The paper mills are not like they used to be. And they never will be.

H: What do you think's changed?

D: Well, today I think it's eh, the young, uh, they don't have enough training. (H: Um hm) That's, that's the whole problem right there. Is the training. They don't have enough training. And like I said, they, Christ they uh, sometimes they'll, they'll train them a couple days. And then they say, "Here, he's yours." A-, and that poor guy don't know nothing. Christ, he's only been there two or, two or three days now. Wha-, what can he learn in two or three days? Nothing. It's just like going to school you know. Hey, Christ, you can't learn anything in two or, in two or three days. (H: Um hm) Christ, it takes years! (H: Um hm) [Well] there's, uh ju-, uh just take uh making paper.

H: So you think they can't, they can't afford the longer training periods now or (- -)

D: They can if they want to. But uh, uh on top of that they're short of help. That's why, that's why they do it. Ah there, they'll just, they'll shove it to you. (H: Um hm) Of course, there, there, I've seen so many guys in there in the last, I been there eighteen years now, I, I, I, I don't know how many, how many people that been in, in and out of that place. You know they, uh they work six seven days and th-, oh geez they got a good pay; (H: Hm) the next week they take a couple of days off. Eh you got to double up. So and that, and that don't help the company either. (H: Um hm) You know they uh, they got to pay that time and a half after eight hours. (H: Um hm) Eh, now if two guys are working twelve, that's time and a half. (H: Um hm) After eight hours. Eh, eh, there's a lot of things, eh, oh boy.

H: Is this what's going, you had mentioned overtime, eh, eh (- -) (D: Uh yeah) This is

what's happening now?

D: In, eh whe-, whe-, when I first started there, w-, of course they uh, they used to take time off then, too, but Jesus, not, not like today. (H: Hm) Not like today. Christ, they call me at, at two three o'clock in the morning. (H: Really) Uh, du-, duhew-, the guy is si-, eh they have a bad run, they call me up. D-, the guy, when he, he, he walks out. Of course they can't say anything. He say-, he says he's got, he-e's sick. He ain't sick. (H: Um hm) He, he can't tell me that. At, because it's not going good. You know and they got to work. That, you know the, the guys today don't want to work. That's what it is. (H: Hm) Ya ju-, I'm not only uh, I'm not only talking about the Spanish people. The white guys the same thing. They have the, they uh, I think they take them off the street, and give them a job, and they don't appreciate it. That's what I think.

H: So, this is, there's a different (D: And they get (- -)) atmosphere. Um hm.

D: A-and, and they get a good (- -) Oh yes. Absolutely.

H: So not as, (D: So) it's not as friendly as it (D: Oh [unclear]) used to be between the workers or (- -)

D: A-, a-, and me, I try to help them out (H: Um hm) as much as I can. And they all hate me. All, all the third hands hate me. Because there whi-, once in a while of course I get mad. I got to get mad. I got to put them through the he-, "Hey, you're here to work, not, nau-" (- -) I go to the coffee machine all the time. They, they uh, they, they have a coffee machine, sandwich machine you know. (H: Um hm) And when you get a break, you know you, I got to run down the, there, the place up and down all day. It, it's like I said, the help today is, it's not like it used to be. (H: Um hm) And it never will be, as far, as far as I'm concerned. [both talk] And they're all young guys you know. (H: Um hm) Dro-, dro-, drop out. But I call them drop outs you know, from school. But some of them even, even graduated high school. (H: Um hm) And they come in there and, and then they, they try to tell you, you know wha-, what to do. I said "Hey, what, what the, oh!" Oh I get u-, oh I get so, so upset and so mad at them; and, and they call eh, they all call me the old [grouch]. I come in in the morning, "Oh, here comes the old [grouch]." I, I can hear them you know. I, I'm deaf but I'm not that deaf. (H: Hm)

H: M-maybe you could uh describe for me some, um of the changes that you've noticed in the, in the industry since you've been around since a lot of the mills closed, (D: Oh, uh, yeah) in Holyoke, and uh I, (D: Well) it's unclear to me, some of them were technological changes and then uh (D: Right) s-sometimes (D: Yeah) uh, uh [both talk] legislation or (- -)

D: Uh, a lot of things too I think is that eh that pollution. (H: Um hm) You know that uh, uh, I d-, I don't know how come this guy got it but (- -)

H: You mean (D: That's uh) the federal pollution laws or (- -)

D: Yeah, right.

H: You think that's (- -)

D: I think, uh I think that's got a l- (- -)

[tape stops]

MD: What is it, half an hour tape?

H: Yeah.

[end of side one]

D: Which, which, which they, they're o-, they only been there, oh I'd say maybe three, four, five years. You know, they push them up. And, I don't know there's, a lot of change, I'll tell you. A lot of change and uh eh, and they're uh, uhh, now how in the heck would I say that? [pause: 3 sec.] [Mrs. Dube coughs] Uhh Jesus. In the material too. (H: Um hm) You know there uh eh, in them days we used to have rags, uh, uh you know, a lo-, a lot of stuff like that and then they cut that out; and they tried to make the paper as cheap as they could. Y-y-y-you know what I mean? They cut everything out, and they tried to make paper with, with uh, wi-, wi-, with nothing. As far, as far as uh, uh as I'm concerned. (H: Um hm) And maybe Ray uh, uh, told, told, told you that, too. You know the uh, the uh, the material today is not as good as it used to be. (H: Um hm) That's, uh that's, that's my opinion. And they cut out a lot, a lot of uhh, uhh uh stuff that used to make the paper good. Nice, nice paper. And uh, and uh, uhh the sizing and all that, that's all, that's all cheap stuff now. You know they, th-they're trying to get away with, with a, with a, with a, with a lot of uh chemicals tha-, that they used to use in them days to make a really good paper, li-like rags and all that. (H: Um hm) And they cut that out, and they, and now they [did] these slabs and uh and they put everything in there you know.

H: What effect (D: And (- -)) did that have on the workers? Those changes? [Mr. Dube coughs] Did uh (- -)

D: Well they made it easier. (H: Um hm) Easier on, on, on some of them. You know like uh, like the [beater] room, they made it easier. (H: Um hm) Geez, they, gosh! They uh, they didn't have to uh, a-, a-, and then in them days, they used to have [beaters]. They don't have that no more. (H: Um hm) See they uh that's, and that's another thing. Whe-, whu-, when they used to put the stuff in the [beaters], it u-, it used to last about two, two to three hours. They [unclear], they drop it, and they put it o-on to the machine. But in, and it was all nice, nice and cut up then. Boy they eh, and they went on the machine and they didn't have any trouble at all. But like I say, now, now they got slushers. (H: Um hm) And, and they dump everything in the slusher all, all at once. And, geez, I'd say maybe fifteen, twenty minutes now. You know they, and they got, and they got, well I, I call it a [beater] and, and, and it's up and it, it's, i-, into a, a [unclear].

H: Did people lose (D: So) their jobs because of this? A-anybody lose their jobs (D: Oh yeah) because of those changes?

D: The, the one that used to uh work in the uh, in the uh, in the rag room. (H: Um hm)

They uh, they all lost their jobs.

H: Who, who did work usually in the rag room?

D: [Talking at the same time] And, and then, oh yeah, and then fr-from the rag room they used to have these uh big tanks, (H: Um hm) and, and the rags used to go in there. And boy, it, it used to stink, too.

H: Was that mostly (D: So) women or, (D: Uh) in the rag rooms?

D: Uh, I'd say yeah. Yeah, there were, uh, u-, uh, uh, uh, they, they, they used to have a lot of women up there.

H: What happened to the women [Mr. Dube coughs] when they [both talk]

D: And then they used to have sorters. (H: Um hm) You know, they uh, uh, they, they used to cut the paper on a cutter, and used to bring them over. Uh certain paper now not, n-, not all of them. A certain kind of paper th-, and the women used to sort them.

H: This in the finishing (- -)

D: [both talk] In the finishing department. Right. And aw geez, they used to have, aw I'd say maybe twenty, twenty-five uh, uh women, they used to sort it. If there eh, eh, if there was a bad sheet they tore it up. But in them days uh it's like I say, in them days the machine wasn't going tha- that fast. But today uh, Christ, i-, it's like I say, an hour and a half to two hours, to make uh you know wa- uh one roll. (H: Um hm) But now, twenty, twenty-five minutes, a half an hour.

H: Wha- what happened to those workers that uh, a lot of them women, (D: Well) who lost their jobs?

D: Aw they, I, I don't know what happened to them.

H: Did they go to (D: [No]) other mills or did they work in new (D: No!) industries or (- -)

D: They, I don't know where they went.

H: Did you have any friends that lost their jobs i-i-, during the uh, these, th-the times when things changed?

D: Oh yes! I had a lot of friends that lost their jobs.

H: What became of them? Did they (- -)

D: Well they got jobs

H: Move out of the area or (- -)

D: Uhh somewhere else. Oh yeah, there's some of them went to the, uhh what's that (- -) And that, uh, uh, and that closed. No that Forge. Uh what the hell [unclear]. Uh that's closed too now. Ahh [unclear] And then they went to uh, what the hell's then the next one across there? Uhh, Denson? You know that uhh (- -) (MD: Dennison?) Yeah. Yeah, there was uh, what the hell'd they used to call that before? National [unclear]. (H: Um hm) Uh a lot of them went there, and uh you know to [unclear], and some of them went uh, went I don't know to, I don't, I don't know the place, American [Pad], and uh a, a lot of them went to this uh Forge there. What the (- -) I forgot the name of that place.

H: H-how were you able to keep your job i-in all this? Was it uh [both talk]

D: Well seniority. (H: Seniority) Yeah.

H: Yeah. That was the main thing that (- -)

D: Yeah. That's wha-, that's what kept me there. Of course a lot of, a, a lot of guys died, too. You know as I, as, as I got seniority a lot of them died, a lot of them, you know uh retired. (H: Um hm) And uh because they were getting old enough you know to go. But I can say boy a l-, a lot of people died in my place. Jesus! They eh, they, they didn't even collect a check. From uh wha-, wha-, from retirement. (H: Hm) A lot of them! Boy I hope I can. I got three, three more years to [Mrs. Dube laughs] go and (- -)

H: [chuckles] Hope so, too.

D: Geez!

H: Um, di-did any of the mills add jobs, a lot of jobs with the technological changes?

D: Oh, not, well not in our place, they (- -) Uh it's like I said, we had a fourth hand, they took that out. (H: Um hm) And they had uh, they took out, let's see, a fourth hand, they took out one, [pause: 3 sec.] eh one, well there's two, uh one a shift, three shifts, that's three, six, that's six men they, they took out. And plus, they speed up the machine on top of that. (H: Hm) And in the uh [beater] room they took out three. Uh, no six. Six there, too. And uh, e-, every time they you know they, they take out they speed up the machine and it's more work for us. (H: Um hm) [clears throat] It's like I say, in the old days I didn't have, I didn't have to pick up [broke]. But uhh like today I, I got help [to turning] I, I got help to [turn it to] what to pick up the [broke]. (H: Um hm)

H: So, how's um, what about when you started (- -)

D: Well I look, I don't know, Christ I'm, I'm going on, on sixty years old. I'm, I'm working harder now than, than whe-, when, than when I, I was thirty. (H: That so) Geez! I'm working twice as hard!

H: What about when they added things like the, the laboratories and the, and the different means of testing the, the quality of the paper? Did, (D: Oh!) did those things uh (- -)

D: That's, that's another thing. They, they had uh, they used to have a, a paper tester, (H: Um hm) every shift, (H: Um hm) they took that out, and the machine tender has to do that now.

H: So it didn't make the job easier. It actually (D: No, uhh) increased (- -)

D: It, it created more, more, more work for everybody. (H: Um hm) Even, even the machine tender. That's right! The paper tester. (H: Um hm) They took them out. And they, and the machine tender had, had, had to do that too now. Aw yeah cripes, I was, I wasn't thinking about that. That's right. (H: Um (- -)) Yeah, he eh, he, he had to go you know uh to the lab. And he, he had to uh take the [pick] and everything.

H: What about the, the union? Uh, how strong is the union? Are um, are you involved in the union a lot? Uh what (- -)

D: Well, I, I, I don't go uh to the meetings. As, as far as that goes. Uh, uh the only time I go when uh, when uh, eh, is for a raise or you know. Eh, eh, that's about it. But I should go, but. But there's nobody that goes. Ask, ask Mr. Beaudry. Like e-, e-, every month he says that's all there is is the officers (H: Um hm) of, of, of the union and uh, uh, and a few other guys.

H: If (D: That's it) nobody goes does that mean it's pretty good times? Now? For the paper workers? I mean they, they don't have anything necessarily to (- -)

D: No, they, they (- -)

H: Complain about with the union?

D: They just go there and they, and they sit around for about a half and hour. (H: Yeah) A-, a-, if nobody shows up, uh to, to complain, you know, (H: Hm) uh, well they leave. (H: Yeah) They don't stay there. Why, why, why should they stay there? The-, the-, there's nobody there to uh, to complain about anything. But, they sure complain in the shop. And I, I keep telling them guys, "Hey, if you want to complain, go, go up the union hall." That's wha-, that's what the union hall is there for.

H: What about social gatherings, uh, for the workers, I mean do the workers get together outside of the, outside of the shop at all? Annual picnics or uh, dinners, or clubs, or (- -)

D: Well, we have uh, I think it's twice a year we have, what (- -)

MD: Christmas party.

D: Oh, yeah, they have a Christmas party.

MD: They used to have kid, (D: Yeah, yeah) things for kids and all that. They cut that out.

H: They don't have that (- -)

D: Oh yeah, that's years ago!

MD: They used to have a lot of parties; no more; just the Christmas party. (D: Yeah) Unless there's a special occasion that comes up.

D: Yeah, the union.

H: Was that organized by the union? Or was that (D: Yeah) just the (- -)

D: No, no. That, that was the union.

MD: They used to have nice gifts for the kids. They cut that out (D: Yeah) years ago.

H: Why do you think they stopped it?

MD: I don't know [unclear] [Mr. and Mrs. Dube both talk]

D: Well, they, they ain't enough, they ain't enough in the union. (H: Oh, I see) That's why our, our union are so high today. We, we have to pay nineteen dollars a month, (H: Um hm) for uh, for union dues. That's why. [unclear] well, they, there, there's nobody left. Around here. (H: Um hm) I-in them days they had the uh, they had Parson, a-, uh, th, yeah, they had Parson, they had uh, oh, gosh.

MD: American Writing.

D: [Mr. and Mrs. Dube both talk] Yeah, well that's right. Parson, American Writing, they had the, the Crocker-[McCullen]. They had the Whiting, Whiting Mills. They had four mills at one time. (H: Um hm) Whiting. And uh the Chemical, (H: Um hm) the Newton, uh (- -) Oh, they had a lot of mills and there, and there was, eh was all the same union. So they uh, prac-, practically the same union. But American Writing had uh, let's see, they had the uh [pause: 5 sec.] Uh I'll start with the Crocker, then the Mt. Tom. Uhh, well the, they had the Gill, and then they had one here in Jackson, uhh, the Linden. Gee, I missed one somewhere. Crocker, [pause: 5 sec.]

H: And these were (- -)

D: I m-, I missed one you know, but (- -) And uh, of course there used to be o-o-over three hundred people, (H: Um hm) at that time. Cripes, uh, three hundred. God, there used to be all uh, about eight nine hundred.

H: Is everyone at Glenweave now [Mr. Dube coughs] in the union? Is it a (- -)

D: Oh yeah, [both talk] you, yeah you have to belong.

H: You have (D: Oh yeah) to belong to the union. (D: Oh yeah)

MD: Well you go once a year, (D: Well) every time they, you have a new contract. (D: Well) You (D: Yeah) never know if you're going to strike or not. [Mr. and Mrs. Dube both talk]

D: Well every three years, ah we're supposed to get a little raise there in June. (H: Mm) It ain't going to be much. (H: Mm) About, uh I think it's three, no I think it's three percent. (H: Um hm)

H: Wh-what does it uh, (- -)

D: Ah, a lot of change, lot of change today from, fro-, from then boy. And I mean a lot of change.

H: What happens when a worker retires? Eh, the compa-, does the company do anything?

D: Yeah, well the, no the union. (H: The union does) The union gi-ves them a little party. (H: Um hm) That's it. He gives him a watch and (- -) (H: Um hm) A little party, that, that's all, they, they, at the [unclear]. (H: Uh huh) You know on [Limey Street]? (H: Um hm) Ah the last time there was what, four? Four guys were, were they retired at the same time. (H: Um hm) And there, and wa-, and they, and they made a little party for them. There, they each got a watch and uh, what the hell? Aw, and the, ah a [little] uh, uh certificate there. (H: Um hm) You know for, for the good work they, they did and all that. But that's the union, that ain't the company that, (H: Uh huh) that does that. But uh I think the company don't, don't care i-if you're there tomorrow or not.

H: Um, I don't know, this m-question maybe doesn't a-affect you, but maybe you know of people that uh, i-it might have affected. Eh um, but I gue-, was there a kind of, I guess I heard um race, s-speak about this some more. Was there a kind of uh, when people moved up in the mill, was there movement out of the, you know you move further out and up the hill in Holyoke uh (- -)

D: Oh yeah, you [both talk]

H: Kind of social (D: Yeah, yeah) moving. Is that (- -) (D: Yeah, yeah) Did you see that much?

D: Oh, and how! Yeah, cripes, there's uh, there's nobody I know down, down (H: I see) there anymore.

H: So everybody moved out of the (- -)

D: Ohh, they all (- -)

H: Neighborhood.

D: Moved out of here.

MD: The sections, (D: that's why (- -)) (H: Yeah) particular section. (H: Yeah) They've all moved up the other sections.

D: [talks at same time as Mrs. Dube] They've all moved out. Oh whe-, well, a lot of them mov-, moving South Hadley. And Chicopee. (H: Um hm) And even Springfield.

H: [Mrs. Dube talks at same time] But they're still working in the mills?

D: Oh yeah. (H: Um hm) Yeah. Yeah, yeah. There's, there's a few that still works in the mills. Yeah, there's uh, from South Hadley, Chicopee. A lot of them li-lived in Chicopee you know.

MD: Not only that, but there was so many fires in South Holyoke at one time, (H: Oh yeah) most people started to move out. (H: Um hm)

D: And then, and then they closed our church.

H: What, (D: Uhhh) what church?

D: Prec-, uh Precious Blood.

H: That was your church [both talk]

D: Yeah. Christ, they use to have almost a thousand parish there. (H: Um hm) At one time. Now they're all gone.

MD: Well within the past two or three years if (D: See) there was twenty, twenty-five people at (- -)

D: Now they eh used to be uh mostly French. (H: Um hm) They, this used to be a [unclear] uh, uh French. (H: Hm) Uh a few Polish, but not, not too many huh? [Mr. and Mrs. Dube talk at same time] But it used to be mostly French. And uh, and that parish was eh, at that time, that was a big parish. (H: Um hm) That Precious Blood.

H: So (- -)

MD: Back within (D: Well) the past two, three years masses weren't held upstairs. They were held downstairs (D: Yeah in the) in the hall. (H: Um hm) (D: In the hall) And the only thing that was keeping them going within the past two years was bingo every Tue-, (H: Um hm) every Tuesday night. But then they had so many robberies there that people stopped coming. They'd park their cars and they'd come out at the end of the evening, this and that, would be batteries would be gone.

D: [Mr. Dube talks at same time] E-everything would be gone out of the car.

MD: So they, they had to stop the bingo. After that it went right down. They couldn't afford to keep it open anymore.]

H: Now you're still living here s-so where do you go now that uh they closed the (- -)

MD: Well, by rights we should go to Perpetual Health. That's where we registered. (H: Um hm) But, we'd have to walk of course. (H: Um hm) certain sections I just don't like to walk even in the daytime. (H: I see) So his sister lives in Westfield, but she goes to Sacred Heart. (H: Um hm) She used to live on Maple Street; she's moved to Westfield and still goes to Sacred Heart. (D: Yeah she, she, she) So (D: Got out of here) she she picks us up on Sunday. (H: I see; um hm) So I'm going to call the other church to tell them not to bother to send envelopes every week because I don't go there.

H: [Do] this, is this true for a lot of the, the uh Precious Blood parishioners?

MD: Aww, well I know some that have gone to uh Chicopee, (H: Um hm) in fact they've gone to St. Anne's over there in Fairview; and uh there are some that go to Perpetual Care, and I've seen some at Sacred Heart since I've started going there with his sister. (H: Hm) I've seen some there. So they're all scattered I would imagine. You know scattered. And th-that's taken over now, the Spanish are trying to get it. (H: Um hm) But right now the front section is taken over by the Sisters of Providence for the homeless. I don't know how many beds and how many people they feed there but that's what's been going on.

D: Oh would you like to have a cup of coffee?

H: Uh, no I'm okay, but please (- -)

D: Ah you're sure now? You're not thirsty?

H: No. [Thank you].

MD: I should have got some Coke. He said 'Did you get any Coke?' I said, "Oh God, I forgot about that."

D: It's all right. [interviewer and Mr. Dube talk at same time] How, how about a nice uh homemade piece of cake?

H: Oh, I couldn't.

D: My wife made a beautiful cake. (MD: Well, probably pretty good) Give him, (MD: Let's put it that way) (H: Um hm) give him a piece. [Mrs. Dube laughs]

H: With that kind of recommendation hm. [all laugh]

MD: It's pretty good. [laughing] The uh (- -)

D: Like, like to have a glass of milk with that or (- -) (H: Oh um) A cup of coffee, or cup of tea.

H: You don't have coffee on so I don't want to trouble you both.

D: No, no. Oh I, me I drink instant. (H: Hm) Yeah, I drink instant.

H: If you're going to have one then uh (- -)

D: Yeah, I'll have one. You can shut that off if you want to.

H: Um (- -) [brief break in tape; sound of spoons and cups clinking] If you tell me about your family then I should (- -)

D: Oh you want to (H: Because we're) know about that, too?

H: We're, it's very interested uh, such a close relationship especially I suppose in a family like yours, the, the relationship between the work (D: Yeah) and, and raising a family at the same time.

D: Ah, I got one works uh the Fire Department, and I got one he's a boss at the, at [unclear]. Ehh, (MD: Machine shop) machine shop. (H: Hm)

MD: He's a foreman, I think that's what they call him.

D: Ahh, he's a f-, a superintendent. (MD: Whatever) And uh, one the Fire Department, and then I got another one he works for uh, he's on construction. That's my youngest. (H: Um hm) And the oldest one works for the uh Post Office [Mrs. Dube coughs] (H: Um hm) in Springfield. What's, [unclear] the big post office (H: Hm) you know the biggest one.

MD: Plus he works for Holyoke Transport, he's got two jobs. Because he used to be in the National uh, not the National Guard but

D: Ahh, Army Reserve.

MD: The Army Reserves and he, he had seven years of that and he said "I, I've had it." Although the pay is good. (D: Ah well) You know they go away two weeks out of the year.

D: He had six years too in the uh Navy Reserves.

H: Any (MD: So) children that uh worked in, in the paper industry?

D: No. No. [Mrs. Dube says something in background] No, I kept them out of there. No way. [Mrs. Dube coughs]

H: Who, this, that was your decision to (- -)

D: No, it wasn't

H: Discourage,

D: Mine.

H: Discourage them from that?

D: It was [with] them.

H: But you would discourage them from (- -)

D: Well, I talked to them. I said "I hope you have a", I, I used to tell them "I hope you, you'll never work in the paper mill."

MD: No, they said, "No, Dad, we don't want to go work in the paper mill. Too, the work is too hard." [unclear]

D: No they, they, they, [Mrs. Dube coughs] they all got good uh, good uh e-education. They, they, they knew wha-, what they wanted and, and they went after it.

MD: Because the youngest one, he worked on that [Monat] building there for Connells, on construction, the [Monat] building in Springfield. They just about got done building that (D: Yeah) not too long ago. And now he's working over the uh, they closed the Savage Farms in uh (H: Um hm) Springfield; and the, is it a motorcycle place? (D: Yeah) And then making what else? Condos (H: Um hm) out of it. Sso he's working there right now. Plus he's (D: Yeah, he's (- -)) gone back to Westfield College, because he wants to teach. [Mr. Dube clears throat] Eh if he can get nineteen credits I think, uhh he'll, it will give him enough that he'll be able to teach at the Dean Vocational School (H: Hm) when it opens next year. And that's where he graduated from. And at the time, he was working uhh, well since he was fourteen, Jeffrey? He was working for [Doan] and Williams, and that's how he got his start, for [Doan] and Williams; and there's no union there.

D: Ahh he, he started at Holyoke High School and then one day he came home, he said, "Dad," he said, "you wouldn't mind if I go to Holyoke Trade." Said, "Of course not. You want to go to Holyoke Trade, go ahead." So he, he started uh, oh uh (- -)

MD: He learned carpentry.

D: I want to show you the nice (- -) That's when he got out of school. No, he was still in school, right?

MD: When he made it for a Christmas present.

D: Yeah. Come here, I'll show you.

MD: But people don't, no use for uh cabinetmaking now. He hasn't done that for a long time.

[Mr. Dube and interviewer talk in background]

D: Boy that's heavy, too. Ooh! It takes two, boy, to pick that up. That's solid, solid oak.

MD: He could have all the work he wanted in cabinetmaking if he wanted to.

D: Oh yeah. Well the, he's got enough work. Yeah he bought his own house, he was eighteen.

H: So how would you sum up your uh,

MD: The girls are more or less in nursing.

H: The paper industry, in Holyoke? It's, it's not something that you would uh (- -)

D: Naw.

MD: That we don't know anybody [chuckles] but it's all Spanish. South Holyoke is mostly Spanish.

D: Ah it's, it's all Spanish now [unclear].

MD: They're tearing down buildings and what's going [up] (- -)

D: I, I don't call this South, South Ho-Holyoke anymore. I call it uh Puerto Rico. (H: Uh huh) I, I even (- -)

MD: It's all Spanish.

D: It's, it's terrible, too.

H: But all in all, satisfactory job uh (- -)

D: Oh my job, I'm, I'm secure until I get out of there.

H: [both talk] Is this something that you can look back on and, and uh (D: Oh yeah!) say you enjoyed (D: Oh uh) for the most part?

D: Yes, yes, yes. Absolutely. Yeah, i-, they, I, it gave me my, my bread and butter. Gave me, I, I used to love to go to work, believe me. But lately there I don't.

MD: See this, this section in town, it's going to be all industrial. That was predicted. (H: Uh huh) And the machine shop in the back here, there used to be a little grocery store there, there used to be um, what was the name of that hall? We used to go dancing there and all that. (D: Ahh, gee) They tore that down. Then h-they tore the A and B. The Hofbrau used to be across the street. That catered to business.

D: Ah, that used to be a,

MD: More or less years ago.

D: That used to be a nice restaurant to go to. Real cheap to eat, I mean, it was a nice place, I mean the uh, the price, the pricewise it was reasonable. And they gave you a good meal.

H: So the neighborhood (D: We) itself has changed.

MD: Has changed. (D: [And all]) That's what's happened, yeah.

D: [Mr. and Mrs. Dube both talk] And [I'll call] you ah you, you, you, used to attract all the businessmen. They used to go over there. And sometimes they used to have uh you know meetings in there. That used to be a nice place.

MD: What happened is with all the fires in the machine shop in the back here, they had bought these four corners. They got this block. (D: They got this block too) They bought the bar across the street. They got the Hofbrau. They, they're tearing everything down. They went across the street and they made parking lots out of that. And they're trying to get, if they get the rug company, on the corner here, (H: Um hm) then they will have a square, borders on four streets. (H: Um hm) Now the state is, not the state, the city, is trying to stop them from tearing down this block, because there's twenty-four apartments in these blocks. There's nothing wrong with these apartments. (H: Um hm) Even if they raise the rents. And pricewise, [Mr. Dube laughs] we pay a hundred and forty a month. Pricewise where are you going to pay that? [Mr. Dube laughs] For five rooms. (D: Five rooms) Where are you going to pay that for five rooms? And it's a decent one.

D: Eh, he just went up, too. A couple months ago.

MD: It's a decent rent. You know. (H: Mmm) So uh, and that would put twenty-four families, well not in the street, but (H: My goodness) we'd pay at least four, four-fifty. Ourselves right now we're looking, we're going to try and go in with one of the boys. We've been looking for a house, because if we have to move we're going to pay the four-fifty anyway, (H: Um hm) so you might as well go out and try and buy a house (H: Um hm) you know. If, course they, they uh, they're, they've extended. First it was [Mr. Dube clears throat] one year we had to get out, then it was three, five, now it's probably ten years down the road (H: Um hm) but (- -)

D: I don't think they,

MD: I don't know what's going to happen.

D: I don't think they'll never tear these down. (H: Hm)

MD: Even if they fixed it up a little bit and raised the rent.

D: I doubt it.

MD: It's cheap. [chuckles] Not too many places like that anymore. (H: No) And it's quiet. This section, this corner, particular corner is quiet. Because we have no neighbors. That's what it is. But South Holyoke has changed. There's been so many fires, (H: Uh huh) and they've torn down buildings.

D: And the people are moving out. (H: Um hm)

MD: It's all Spanish, more or less, (D: Yeah) and there, there's what, seven brand new homes? (D: Yeah) They're duplex. They go for fifty thousand. You put those homes in the upper sections, you're going to go into the nineties (H: Um hm) and a hundred thousand. (H: Um hm) You know. (D: Yeah) But it's all the Spanish that are buying them.

D: Ahh the paper, the paper industry here now isn't, I don't know what it, I hope it's going to last another three, three years. That's where I am.

H: Well, do you [Mrs. Dube talks in background] have any, (D: Uh) do you have any last thoughts on that? I know I've (--) (D: Beg your pardon?) Do you have any last thoughts o-, on this? I, I've kept you talking for (--) [both talk]

D: Well, it's uh, I mean, it's, it's, we're still going stronger, as far as working. You know the orders are coming in, and the, the (--) (H: Um hm) And right now eh they, the, last week they said well, we're going to five days. So, geez, everybody was, "Oh boy! Five days!" And they said wuh for the rest of the month and maybe, maybe the whole summer. So now uh Monday I went in, they says, "Six days." (H: Um hm) So we're back to six days, so (--) Of course I got to go in Sunday to boil up. So that's a, that's four or, four or five hours, on Sunday. So (--)

H: So the industry st-, seems pretty healthy right now?

D: Oh yeah! Oh yeah. Our place you know. (H: Um hm) But as far as Parson uh, I, I hear they're, they're on to, some weeks they're on four days, some weeks five. And it's been like that for quite a while.

H: What do you think Linweave h-ha-, any thoughts on that, w-wh-why Linweave is doing well? I mean are they doing anything different?

D: Well this, (H: From Parson?) it's about, uh, uh that's about the o-, uh, uh, uh the only mill that, where they can do that kind of work. That kind of paper. (H: Um hm) See Pa-Parson can't, can't do it. (H: I see.) See they can't do that work. Well we're, uh we're, we're the only mill here, in Holyoke that uh, that, that can do all that. So that's why we're, we're, why we're getting

the orders, too. Of course uh M-, Mr. Belsky knows a lot of, a lot of people too you know. And that's all he's got is two uh, two guys there where they goes out and get the orders. And uh, of course he duh, he does a lot on his own. He does a lot on his own. So, ri-, right now I think he went to Florida there. And he gets, he gets uh, he gets to know a lot of business people you know. And he went to California, and (- -) Eh he does, he does, eh he does a lot on his own. So, at least, ala-, ala-, ala-, at least the work is coming in. (H: Um hm) And we're working, it's like I said, the last eight years there we, we, we been on seven days a week.

H: Well I hope you (- -) (D: So)

MD: More or less. He won't takes

H: I hope it keeps going.

MD: Vacation. (D: Well)

H: I hope you uh are s-, are [open] until your retirement. (D: Ah I hope (- -))

MD: [talks at same time] Because at his age if they close down it will be a hard time to get going somewhere else at his age.

H: Yeah, yeah. So.

MD: That's what that amounts to. (H: Yeah) [unclear] not get a job in that as easy as it sounds. There's so many young ones out of work. [all three talk]

D: Ah my, my son will fix me up. [Mrs. Dube laughs]

[interview is over, but tape continues to record background noises for about 5 minutes]

[end of tape]